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OPINION

Software Piracy A Serious Crime

If nothing else, last week's indictment of David M. LaMacchia '95 on charges of conspiracy to commit wire fraud makes it obvious that the Institute did not do enough to prevent the type of behavior that occurred when copying software was ignored; it appears as though the FBI now has as much concern for those who steal software as for those who steal cars or rob banks.

The indictment indicates that LaMacchia knew what sorts of software were being traded on his archive site though LaMacchia's attorneys deny this point. While it is tempting to say that LaMacchia is guilty or innocent based on what limited information has emerged so far, a number of questions will remain unanswered until LaMacchia goes to court. Until then, it is foolish for students to condemn LaMacchia as a criminal or to hold him up as a symbol of injustice. At the very least we should be cautious in making such judgments; his defense should carefully consider whether LaMacchia broke any laws before rallying to his defense. Institute officials have remained relatively forthcoming on this case, but their actions speak louder than words ever could. It is apparent from the indictment and from news articles that MIT is quite serious about stopping software piracy on campus. The issue is complicated by the fact that MIT's computer network is owned and operated by the Institute, or connected to MITnet. Perhaps this attitude exists not only for moral reasons, but also because MIT is afraid of being prosecuted or even having its legal software duplicated. Whatever the reason, it is good for MIT to adopt such an attitude. After the publicity from the indictment, Institute officials would be wise to disseminate information regarding what constitutes wire fraud and software piracy, and the legal permission required to use software. Some have criticized LaMacchia's indictment as overly harsh. Indeed, it does seem like a serious act of lawbreaking on the part of students to use an account in order to distract others from attempting to abuse network systems. But at the same time, LaMacchia stands accused of a serious crime. LaMacchia's case hits home because he is one of us. But appearances can be deceiving, and if he is found guilty of the charges presented in the indictment, LaMacchia should be punished accordingly.

Letters To The Editor

MIT/Amgen Agreement Should Benefit Both Parties Equally

After reading about the recent MIT/Amgen agreement, I began to do some serious thinking. I began to wonder about the ethical ramifications of the deal that was made and came to some disturbing conclusions. This issue concerns Amgen's opinion of the new pact. Jordan Brewer, chief executive officer of Amgen, says, "We are enthusiastic about this promising collaboration, which could serve as a model for industry-academia partnerships. It's not a reason that Amgen really appreciates the arrangement. Amgen will own some very impressive research. MIT is never going to be the best and will probably produce something that gives Amgen no less than a few hundred million dollars in profits - all for only a $30 million grant. Of course, as Director of the Center for Cancer Research Richard G. Hyper PHD "II, states, "Amgen will want to spend its money on research they find interesting and useful." "[MIT and Amgen Ink 10-Year Pact, April 1]

That should read: Amgen will only support MIT research that will give Amgen the most profit even if it may not necessarily benefit the public. Too often, the philosophy of business is to use the lab to develop products which the Institute is supposed to be public. This is not the role of the lab, their role is to use the lab to develop products which the Institute is supposed to be public.

Nazi Holocaust

Repeating in Bosnia

Did you see the memorial to the victims of the Nazi Holocaust, that was in Lobby 7 on Thursday? Did you think to yourself "never again"? Never again do the people of the world allow such atrocities? Then what are you doing about the ongoing conflict in Bosnia from meeting the same fate as the 11 million people killed by the Nazis?

Towns were obliterated and the Bosnians told us that every time there was an attack, the Serbs would be there in a day. "Never again" should mean that when we see people in concentration camps, and the United States has

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The TECH

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